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Inside Labor

Reuther Set To Blast CIA

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WASHINGTON, D.C. There will be more daggers than cloaks flying around a closed room in Chicago's Hotel Ambassador East come August 22.

If the "intelligence community" of labor's high command is as well-informed as it usually is, the word is that the Reuther brothers plan to give the Central Intelligence Agency another going over.

Their position is that the CIA is active in the labor affairs of the world—and probably inside American unions, too.

The brothers, Walter and Victor, disapprove. And at least Victor has openly charged that labor's president George Meany and his International Affairs Director, Jay Lovestone, work closely with the CIA.

It will all come to a loud and angry showdown during the AFL-CIO Executive Council (high command) session in Chicago.

This won't be a family fight—closed doors or no closed doors. The battle story will leak. It always does.

Thus no matter which side wins, the CIA, which undoubtedly has a unit of labor specialists doing what comes naturally in a world rapidly going labor, will lose. Certainly some of its classified activities will be made public.

For some weeks now, Victor Reuther's people have had as small task force here digging up what they can to bolster his charges that Meany and Lovestone virtually are CIA agents. They have a skilled and prolific writer weaving the material into one document which could be published easily. Insiders believe that this will be published as a pamphlet just before the Council meeting.

Anger inside the Meany camp over the original and recent charges by Victor Reuther has been compounded by reports that the younger Reuther, 34-year-old Victor, went to Sen. Fulbright with reports of alleged Meany-Lovestone intelligence activity.

Meany's people believe that Victor Reuther's statements to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman prompted Dr. Fulbright to suggest publicly that the CIA intervenes in U.S. union elections.

The Senator freely discussed the matter with this reporter when I phoned him the other day.

"This is one of the questions which had been in my mind," said the gentleman from Arkansas. "I have had suggestions that they (the CIA) had taken every strong part in labor union organization in the Dominican Republic."

"I believe they have worked and in glove with Meany's crowd in the AFL-CIO. But I truly don't know whether there has been any interference in American unions. I tried to get an answer from the former CIA Director, Raborn. But he would not reply."

When the Senator questioned CIA Director Richard Helms recently, the latter replied that the CIA, to the best of his knowledge, does not "intervene directly or indirectly" in such domestic matters as union elections.

This matter of alleged CIA operations inside labor had followed by a month the flare-up over Victor Reuther's open attack, not only on Meany and Lovestone, but upon the American Institute for Free Labor Development. Victor Reuther had asserted that sections of AIFLD had been used by CIA agents, especially in Panama.

AIFLD is jointly sponsored by labor, management and government. Meany is president; J. Peter Grace, of the famed steamship line, is chairman of the board.

But the active executive is a battling Irishman, Joe Beirne, head of the Communications Workers of America. He is AIFLD secretary-treasurer.

It is the opinion of many observers who have been out in the field, including this column-

ist, that AIFLD has done mighty constructive work. It educates some 20,000 workers and labor officials throughout Latin America. It builds worker-owned housing in the slum areas of big cities such as Mexico City. It has put up social and welfare and clinic centers in such impoverished areas as Carpina in Brazil's rural northeast which I visited last year. It provides disaster aid. It builds playgrounds.

When Joe Beirne heard of Victor Reuther's charges, no ceiling was too high for him to hit. He prepared to bring charges against Victor, though the latter is just the head of the United Auto Workers' International Affairs Dept., and is not a member of the high council which meets on August 22.

What has angered Meany, Beirne and Lovestone more than the criticism made by the Reuthers has been the effect on the AFL-CIO's international work. It would be hampered in its bolstering of free unions abroad if the AFL-CIO national headquarters here was thought to be even a small section of CIA.

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